

CHRISTIANITY IN PRACTICE

A SERIES OF SKETCHES DESCRIBING
INSTITUTIONS AND TYPES OF SERVICE
ON BAPTIST MISSION FIELDS ABROAD

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WEST CHINA

A Mission Hospital in Peace and in War

By C. E. Tompkins, M. D.



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FACTS ABOUT THE WEST CHINA MISSION

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| MISSIONARIES | 50 |
| NATIVE WORKERS | 114 |
| STATIONS | 5 |
| ORGANIZED CHURCHES | 5 |
| CHURCH MEMBERS | 1,267 |
| SUNDAY SCHOOLS | 28 |
| PUPILS | 1,730 |
| THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AND TRAINING SCHOOLS | 3 |
| STUDENTS | 14 |
| HIGH SCHOOLS | 2 |
| PUPILS | 75 |
| SECONDARY SCHOOLS | 3 |
| PUPILS | 96 |
| PRIMARY SCHOOLS | 29 |
| PUPILS | 1,457 |
| APPROPRIATIONS | \$87,512.33 |

A Mission Hospital in Peace and in War

By C. E. Tompkins, M. D.



NO ONE visiting the mission hospital for men at Suifu, West China, the last of 1917, could fail to be impressed by the large contribution that institution was making toward the relief of the serious crisis through which the entire community was then passing, — the throes and horror of a civil war. In that strife between the northern and southern forces, the hospital was literally a life boat to hundreds who otherwise would have perished. The work which was done here demonstrated, with unusual emphasis the fact that Christianity stands preeminently for the aid and comfort of all who are in distress. Many a non-Christian business man would ask why the Christian workers spent so much time and energy caring for the poor wounded. "They are only common soldiers, and their own doctors would not do as much," they would say. Naturally the questioner was told of the Great Friend who went about, Himself, ministering unto the suffering.

Neither of the conflicting armies had adequate equipment, either of trained doctors or supplies, to take care of the wounded as they should be, and so the unfortunate men poured into the mission hospital. This hospital has seventy-five beds, but for weeks it cared for two hundred patients, and for a few days it housed three hundred wounded and refugees. Every nook and all the verandas were packed with patients.

The hospital was open to all sufferers, soldiers and civilians alike. Many an unfortunate civilian, forced by the soldiers to carry ammunition or supplies up to the firing line, fell a victim to the thickly flying bullets, and occasionally some farmer whose house was between the ever changing lines, was struck by a spent bullet.

There were no ambulances in this section, for the country is so hilly, and the roads so uneven that not even a wheelbarrow is seen, so the wounded men were brought in on all kinds of conveyances, including doors, large baskets slung over a carrying pole, temporary stretchers made of two bamboo poles covered with a bedquilt; and sedan chairs, or house chairs with bamboo poles strapped to the sides, and carried by coolies.



WOUNDED SOLDIERS IN THE HOSPITAL AT SUIFU
Another group is shown on the front cover

When an urgent call came for help at a distant fighting sector, a branch hospital was established not far behind the firing line. The group of workers, missionaries and Chinese not only had to carry on their work under most primitive and trying conditions, but had to live amid extremely crude and forlorn surroundings in a battle-torn village. The majority of the patients had to lie on straw pallets, on the floor, or on benches. This work behind the firing line occasioned special comment from the

governor of the province, who recognized the service as being done in the name of Christ.

The entire hospital service treated over two thousand men injured in this conflict, and for nearly three years the wards were not without their wounded patients. The wounds ranged through all degrees of severity, and were in every part of the body, from head to foot. Nearly every case was infected by the time it reached the hospital, for even the "first aid", when applied, left much to be desired!

Officers and privates, high and low, were all brought to the same place, and given the same attention, although the officers were given the private wards. But the hospital did more than minister to the physical needs of the host of patients, although that often taxed to the limit the strength of the staff of loyal helpers, who frequently labored from dawn until nearly midnight, changing the dressings or administering needful remedies. There was an important work to be done in raising the spirits of the poor fellows, especially when there was a strong possibility of reverses to their side. It was often very difficult to quiet their fears, and convince them that they would be protected in any emergency, for it was generally understood that neither army was in the habit of "taking prisoners." On more than one occasion, when there was a change in the fortunes of war, the church and hospital became a haven of refuge for the unfortunate men who were unable to retreat with their companies, and for the terrified populace, panic stricken at the prospect of the soldiers of the victorious army coming into the city, even though the latter were their own countrymen. In scores of cases the missionaries personally piloted the poor fellows, who had been hiding in private houses, to the hospital, after obtaining permission from the commanding officer. A few times we had wounded from each side of the conflict, in the hospital. These fellows are sociable

beings, and it was not long before they fraternized freely. It sometimes happened that the opposing army was in control when a company of wounded at the hospital was convalescent, and the men able to return to their homes. In such a case the mission doctor would secure permission from the general in command, for these men to pass through his lines, and usually the general provided traveling funds for the men. Moreover, a missionary frequently accompanied the party to prevent any possible friction or delay when going from one line to the other. The American flag, always carried at this time, is a symbol of Justice and Honor in West China.

These and numerous other deeds of public service have emphasized the value of Christianity in a most marked way. Never has the Christian church at Suifu had a better rating in the community than today.

There were rare opportunities, too, of impressing upon the wounded men as they rested in the hospital wards day after day, the fact that many of them literally owed their lives to Christ, and *all* were indebted to Him for the relief of pain and the healing of their wounds. For had it not been for the Christ, His message to men, and His example of loving service, there would have been no hospital at Suifu, and no clean dressings for their wounds.

A Chinese chaplain devoted his entire time to religious teaching at the hospital, through conversation, Bible classes and in the daily ward meetings. Every patient, when he left the hospital, received a gospel and a helpful tract to take with him. How far-reaching or effective that evangelistic message was, I cannot tell, but I found a sign of its value in a way that I least expected. One morning while making my rounds, I came to a man who was very seriously wounded. He looked up into my face and said, "Doctor, last night Jesus came to me and said that I shall get well." He was so weak I felt that the end was not far

and that he was delirious, but strange to say, he did recover and left the hospital not long after.



DR. TOMPKINS AND A POOR BLIND BEGGAR WHOSE
SIGHT WAS RESTORED

Thus far we have referred to the "special" service with the wounded, but after all, the greatest work is in ministering to the common ills of the people year after year. The way the populace flocks to the daily dispensary for treat-

ment, and the serious cases which fill the wards of the hospital, furnish ample evidence that this branch of Christian service is meeting a real need.

In a general way the medical work of the hospital may be classified under six heads, as follows:

1. **Out-patient Service.**—A daily dispensary, free for the very poor, and with a small charge for those who can afford it. Some days there are from one hundred and fifty to two hundred patients, and the annual totals show a steady growth, year by year.

2. **Out-Calls.**—Often the doctor is called into the home when the patient is in a critical condition, as in case of accident, suicide, from opium or match poisoning, and burns; also in maternity cases, and at some crisis in an acute disease, or as a last resort in a failing malady. This is not, for the most part, a very satisfactory phase of the work, except in the maternity cases. One is never sure that the treatment outlined will be followed faithfully. It is common knowledge that, in some acute cases, a dozen different doctors will be called in within a couple of days, — each leaving a different prescription. Yet it does offer an opportunity to demonstrate one's interest and sympathy in all the anxieties of the home, — an attitude that is usually appreciated.

3. **In-patient, or Hospital Service.**—This is by far the most satisfactory form of medical work, both from the professional and the missionary point of view. We receive all classes of people, — the proud, rich Confucian scholar, and the poor blind beggar; the earnest Christian teacher or preacher; and the brigand (if he comes incognito); the Taoist priest, and the Mohammedan who must bring his own cooking and serving dishes, lest he be defiled by food cooked or served in anything that had ever contained or come in contact with lard, the product of the "unclean porker". There come to us, also, the

Catholic and the Protestant, the Buddhist and the non-descript. We know them only as “Temples of the Living God.” Patients come from every part of the parish of two million inhabitants, afflicted with every ill common, — and uncommon, — to man, and only one doctor to treat them.

4. Training Helpers. — When the doctor leaves on furlough, the hospital is closed. If this work is to be continuous, or become a vital part of the work of the Christian church in China, it is essential that there be trained Chinese doctors, nurses and other helpers. Up to the present time we have been compelled to get along with the help of young men to whom we have given a little training, but not enough to call them nurses. We are always on the lookout for promising schoolboys, and encourage them to prepare for the medical school, or the school for nurses at the Union University at Chengtu.

5. Preventative Medicine. — Every doctor, and in fact every enlightened person, yearns to see some effort made to remove the disease-breeding conditions which exist throughout China, and to arouse a feeling of appreciation of the value of God’s laws of health and hygiene. Even though the doctor’s strength and time are limited, he and his staff can contribute something toward that objective, by distributing approved pamphlets or posters on various health subjects, and by personal instruction of the patients.

The Suifu hospital co-operates with the church organization in various health campaigns in the city, such as free vaccination clinics; public meetings, with use of lantern slides; issuing of bulletins on timely health problems, and it has also given “health demonstrations” to the students of the mission schools.

6. Religious Work. — Most of the patients are ignorant and illiterate, and can not read the tracts or portions

of the Bible when given them. Neither can they altogether follow the thought of the chaplain or other preacher. But they can understand the "Gospel of Good Cheer and Kindness." So this forms the key note to the efforts of the entire institution. To this end great stress is being laid upon the daily Bible study, prayer, and conference,



DR. TOMPKINS PREACHING IN THE HOSPITAL

with the staff of helpers. It is most gratifying to see the young men who continue in the service of the hospital, make public allegiance to the cause of Christ. Thus, in all our activities, there is this great objective before us, — whether in the daily treatments, in Bible study, in the ward meetings, or in our social relations, — that the patient "may know Jesus Christ, whom to know is Life." We do not measure the success of the religious work in the number who join the church, but by the influence of "kindly deeds done in the Master's name." There is a more friendly attitude toward the teachings of Jesus, and not a few learn to call Him Saviour and Redeemer.

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